

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO DEFENSE MAPPING AGENCY HYDROGRAPHIC CENTER (DMAHC)
NAVAL OCEANIC SURVEILLANCE INTELLIGENCE CENTER (NOSIC)
MARITIME ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE WASHDC

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FOLLOWING REPEAT BANGKOK 16445 ACTION SECSTATE INFO MANILA,
HONG KONG, DIA WASHDC, CINCPAC HONOLULU, AND SINGAPORE
JUN 08.

QUOTE: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE BANGKOK 16445

MANILA FOR USCG

EO 11652: NA
TAGS: CGEN, EWWT, TH
SUBJ: APPARENT ATTEMPTED BOARDING OF US VESSELL

1. CAPT OF SEALNAD CONTAINER VESSELL SS PONCE INFORMED CONSUL
JUNE 6 OF FOLLOWING NOTATION BY CHIEF MATE IN SHIP'S LOG
FOLLOWING CONSUL'S QUERY ABOUT REPORT THAT THE VESSELL WAS
BOARDED BY RIVER PIRATES IN THE CHAO PHYA RIVER 10 KMS BELOW
BANGKOK. BEGIN QTE: ABSTRACT OF DECK LOG ENTRY SS PONCE 5
JUNE 78: 1908 WHILE ABEAM OF UNITED FLOUR DOCK DK/MAINT. H.A.
PRUSS CAST OFF A LINE FROM THE STERN, BELONGING TO A RIVER
PIRATE ATTEMPTING TO BOARD. THE RIVER PIRATES RESPONDED
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WITH SMALL ARMS FIRE. THE PILOT CALLED FOR POLICE ASSISTANCE.
END QTE

2. CAPT JAMES R SHAW INDICATED THAT HE DID NOT HEAR OR
OBSERVE FIRING OR THE ATTEMPTED BOARDING. HOWEVER, SEQUENCE
OF EVENTS WENT IN THE FOLLOWING MANNER: THE SHIP ENTERED THE
CHAO PHYA RIVER AT DUSK, PICKED UP A CUSTOMS OFFICER AND THE

PILOT AND PROCEEDED TO MAKE TH 30 KILOMETER ASCENT OF THE RIVER TO KONG THOEY PORT AREA OF BANGKOK. THE SHIP CARRIED TWO CONTAINERS LOADED WITH 81MM MORTARS, M16 RIFLES, GRENADE LAUNCHERS AND RAPID FIRE WEAPONS FOR NAVAL LAUNCHES CONSIGNMENT TO JUSMAG. CAPT'S VERSION OF WHAT HAPPENED WAS THAT VESSEL WHILE SOME 10KMS SOUTH OF KLONG THOEY JUST AT DUSK IN THE VICINITY OF THE UNITED FLOUR WHARVES, WAS CHASED BY AN OPEN MOTOR LAUNCH CONTAINING 5 APPARENTLY UNARMED MEN WHICH APPROACHED FROM THE STERN MANAGED TO THROW A LING ABOARD WITH A GRAPPLING HOOK ONTO THE STERN RAIL. HOWEVER, THE STERN WATCH DISENGAGED THE GRAPPLING HOOK AND THE BOAT WITHDREW AFTER THE MAN ON WATCH ALSO DROPPED A PIECE OF METAL DEBRIS LYING ON THE DECK INTO THE BOAT FROM THE FANTAIL. THE MAN ON WATCH SAID THERE HAD BEEN SEVERAL OTHER BOATS IN THE VICINITY APPARENTLY IN THE COMPANY OF BOAT WHICH WITHDREW WITH THE THWARTED ASSAILANT. THE PILOT AND CUSTOMS OFFICER OBSERVED NONE OF THE ACTION.

3. CAPT BELIEVES THAT IT MAY HAVE BEEN RIVER PIRATES AIDED AND ABETTED BY CUSTOMS OFFICIALS WHO WERE AWARE OF THE PRESENCE ON BOARD OF WEAPONS. ANOTHER POSSIBLE EXPLANATION IS THAT A SMALL CRAFT SIMPLY WAS HOOKING A RIDE UP TO BANGKOK.

4. THIS LATTER POSSIBILITY IS DISCOUNTED BY THE LOCAL SEALAND REP WHO SAID THAT THERE WAS AT LEAST ONE SIMILAR INCIDENT A YEAR AGO WHEN BOARDERS, IN THE SAME AREA OF THE RIVER,

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SUCCESSFULLY MADE IT ABOARD AND OPENED CONTAINERS AND WERE CAUGHT THROWING 10 CARTONS OF BICYCLES AND HAIR DRYERS OVER BOARD TO TRAILING LONG TAILED BOATS. THE BOARDERS JUMPED OVER BOARD AND WERE NOT APPREHENDED. THE SEALAND AGENT NOTED THAT A NUMBER OF AGENCIES WERE AWARE OF THE DELIVERY OF THE WEAPONS IN ADVANCE, INCLUDING THE PORT AUTHORITY, CUSTOMS, SEALAND AND JUSMAG.

5. SEALAND NOW HAS A STANDARDED REQUIREMENT FOR MAINTAINING A WATCH AROUND THEIR SHIPS PARTICULARLY DURING THE HOURS OF DARKNESS WHILE MOVING UP THE RIVER. WHILE IN PORT, LIGHTS AND SECURITY GUARDS ARE MAINTAINED TO PROTECT THE CONTAINERS. FOLLOWING THIS INCIDENT SEALAND THAILAND HAS RECOMMENDED TO THE COMPANY THAT IN THE FUTURE ALL ARMS SHIPMENTS BE KEPT UNDER DECK.

6. PONCE DEPARTED BANGKOK FOR HONG KONG JUNE 6.

7. COMMENT: THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THIS INCIDENT ARE ADMITTEDLY UNCLEAR. THERE IS NO CONCLUSIVE EVIDENCE THAT THE SHIP WAS ACTUALLY IN THE PROCESS OF BEING BOARDED OR THAT THE WEAPONS ON BOARD WERE THE TARGET. EMBASSY OFFS DID NOT HAVE

THE OPPORTUNITY TO QUESTION SEAMAN PRUSS WHO IS THE ONLY
AVAILABLE WITNESS. HONG KONG MAY WISH TO DO SO WHEN THE PONCE
ARRIVES. UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE DEPT MAY ALSO WISH PUB-
LISH A NOTICE TO MARINERES. END COMMENT. WHITEHOUSE
UNQUOTE VANCE

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